
TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE....

A Column on Consumer Issues

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International Drivers License Scam

Too many points on your driver's license?

License been suspended or revoked?

Can't get a state-issued driver's license?

Want a license that can never be suspended or revoked?

Protect your privacy and identity.

If you're tempted by ads claiming that you can use an international driver's license (IDL) or an international driving permit (IDP) in place of your state-issued driver's license, it's a dead end. Although an IDP is a real document when issued by the proper authorities, it is not a legal alternative to your state issued license. These international driving permits are very clearly described in International law as a document that cannot be used in lieu of a driver's license.

If you are stopped by a law enforcement officer and present an IDL or an IDP, you could be arrested. You could be charged with driving without a license. If you can't produce proof of your identity (for example, a valid driver's license, a state-issued identification card, valid immigration documents, or a passport), the officer may assume that you're trying to withhold your identity and arrest you.

Ads and offers for fake IDLs and IDPs are showing up on websites and as spam e-mail. They are also sold "on the street" and through storefront operations. The price for one of these fake documents can range from \$65 to \$350. The marketers falsely claim that their documents:

- Authorize consumers to drive legally in the U.S., even if they don't have state-issued driver's license or if their state-issued licenses have been suspended or revoked;
- Can be used to avoid points or fines affecting state-issued driver's license; and
- Can be used as photo ID in the U.S.

Licenses purchased on the Internet are never legal driving permits for U.S. citizens residing in the U.S. The U.S. Department of State has authorized only two organizations to issue IDPs to U.S. residents. The organizations, the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the American Automobile Touring Alliance (AATA), are permitted to sell IDPs only to people who are at least 18 years old and only to those who have a valid driver's license issued by a U.S. state or territory. The AAA and the AATA charge \$10 for each IDP.

Remember these facts about IDPs:

- International Driving Permits do exist.
- The people advertising them are not authorized to sell them. (They're peddling similar-looking but unofficial and unauthorized documents.)
- An International Driving Permit will not help you to avoid paying for traffic tickets, keep points off your driving record, establish a new identity, or get you into bars if you are underage.

If you plan to drive overseas, contact your local AAA office or the AATA for more information about acquiring a legitimate IDP. If you have been scammed by a seller of bogus IDLs or IDPs, report it to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at 1-877-382-4357.

The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division investigates allegations of fraud in the marketplace. Investigators also mediate individual complaints against businesses. If you have a consumer problem or question, call the Consumer Protection Division at 328-3404, toll-free at 1-800-472-2600, or 1-800-366-6888 (w/TTY). This article and other consumer information is located on our website at www.ag.state.nd.us.

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